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YOKUTS BABY CRADLES

One of the most interesting phases of Yokuts culture is their method of handling and carrying their children. Many of the things to be discussed here vary slightly among the Yokuts tribes, but the general scheme was once much the same from the Cosumne River and Martinez on the North to Tehachapi and Paleta on the south. By far the most effective Yokuts artifacts, at least as regards the rearing of children, are these baby cradles, or baskets. The most detailed account concerning this interesting piece of equipment was that furnished by a prominent family of the *Wukchumne* tribe.

Among the Wukchumne it was customary to hold a ceremony, or meeting, practically identical with the modern baby shower. Even though many of the primitive customs have held over into civilized life, and persons who have studied primitive life are more or less accustomed to such parallels, it comes as a surprise to everyone to find that such an interesting custom was so well established among the primitive inhabitants of the San Joaquin Valley.

The materials used in the construction of the baby cradle varied slightly among the numerous tribes. The Tachi, who occupied the north shore of Tulare Lake, wove a very interesting cradle of tule. It was soft and pliable and formed a good mattress for the child. The *Choinok* and *Wolasi* attached a tule pad to the bed of a wicker cradle.

The plains and foothill tribes made a very light and strong cradle. Some tribes used slender willow wythes. In the construction of their cradles the Wukchumne used cottonwood twigs.

Among the Wukchumne two separate cradles were used for each child. The first cradle was sometimes made by the mother, although a grandmother, or some other old lady of the tribe, often made it and sold or presented it to the mother. This cradle was about thirty inches in length and so woven of cottonwood twigs that it could be rolled up like a piece of matting, the cross stitching being made of pliable cladium roots. This was a temporary cradle and the baby was kept upon it for a matter of three or four weeks.

As soon as the child was born, materials were assembled and construction started on a large, permanent cradle. This was not possible before, because the design used in weaving the